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## Travelers' Tips

On Bringing Food, Plant,  
and Animal Products Into  
the United States

# DECLARE



# DON'T PACK A PEST



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## **A Special Message for Travelers**

Please take a few minutes to become familiar with restrictions on bringing agricultural products into the United States. This booklet lists acceptable or enterable agricultural products and tells you about other products that require permits or are prohibited.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) places limits on items brought to the United States from foreign countries as well as those brought to the mainland from Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Prohibited items can harbor foreign animal and plant pests and diseases that could seriously damage America's crops, livestock, pets, and environment.

Because of this threat, you are required to declare any meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, animals, and plant and animal products you have with you. Your declaration must cover all items carried in your baggage and hand luggage or in your vehicle.

## **One Piece Can Spell Danger**

Travelers are often surprised when told that their "one little piece of fruit or meat" can cause serious damage. In fact, one item carelessly discarded can wreak havoc on American crops. For example, it's quite likely that a traveler carried in the wormy fruit that brought Mediterranean fruit flies to California in 1979. The 3-year fight to eradicate this pest cost more than \$100 million. Subsequent infestations in California and Florida have cost even more to eradicate.

A single link of sausage contaminated with the dreaded virus that causes foot-and-mouth disease could do similar damage to the livestock business. Foot-and-mouth disease last struck the United States in 1929. Economists say that an outbreak today would cost farmers and consumers billions of dollars in lost production, higher food prices, and lost export markets.

Even when you believe that the item you are buying is safe, exercise caution and common sense. When you are thinking about buying agricultural souvenirs, remind yourself of the old saying, "let the buyer beware." Duty Free shops do not have any special authorization, clearance, or certification with USDA allowing them to sell prohibited products. Even if signs and displays say "USDA Approved," be skeptical. Please stick to items on the lists of approved products in this booklet, and always tell USDA or Customs Service inspectors everything you have that is an agricultural product.

## Declarations Prevent Fines

The declaration you're required to make may be oral, written, or both. If you're traveling from abroad on a plane or ship, you will be given a Customs form on which to declare your agricultural products. You will also be asked to indicate whether you have visited a farm or ranch outside the United States.

Officers of the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) inspect passenger baggage for agricultural products. At some ports, inspectors use dogs from USDA's Beagle Brigade to sniff out hidden items. At other ports, officials use low-energy x-ray machines adapted to reveal fruits and meats.

Smugglers get caught. In an average month, inspectors find more than 3,000 violations. A traveler who fails to declare a prohibited item is fined on the spot (up to \$1,000), and the item is confiscated and safely destroyed in a grinder or incinerator.



## Fruits, Vegetables, and Plants

You may bring in some fruits, vegetables, and plants without advance permission, provided they are declared, inspected, and found free of pests. However, you must get a permit in advance to bring in certain plants and plant parts intended for growing. For information on permits, contact USDA-APHIS-PPQ's permit unit at the address listed in the first paragraph of appendix 1. To bring back endangered or threatened plant species, in some cases you will need permits or certificates from the country of origin as well as from the U.S. Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Please see appendix 1 for contact information.

## **Meat and Animal Products**

Regulations prohibit you from bringing in fresh, dried, or canned meats and meat products from most foreign countries. If any meat is used in preparing a product, it is prohibited. Regulations concerning meat and meat products change frequently based on disease outbreaks worldwide. Contact your local APHIS—PPQ office for more complete information. Be prepared to stipulate the exact type of meat you would like to bring back and its country of origin.

Hunting trophies, game-animal carcasses, and hides are severely restricted. If you intend to bring them in, contact USDA—APHIS Veterinary Services' National Center for Import and Export (NCIE) for applicable information and permit forms. Please see appendix 1 for contact information.

FWS regulates the import and export of wild and endangered animals and plants and their products. More information is available in their free publications "Facts About Federal Wildlife Laws" and "Buyer Beware Guide."

## **Live Animals and Birds**

Live animals and birds can enter the United States subject to certification, permits, inspection, and quarantine rules that vary with the animal and its origin. Dogs that have been in Central and South America pose a special health hazard if they have wounds infested with screwworms. If your dog has even a small wound, be sure to have it treated before you travel to the United States.

Pet birds you purchased abroad for your personal use can enter, subject to restrictions by some State departments of agriculture, if quarantined by USDA for 30 days. Make quarantine arrangements in advance because facilities are limited and available at only certain ports. For information and a permit application, contact NCIE.

No Federal quarantine is required for personally owned U.S. pet birds returning to the United States. Bring along a valid U.S. veterinary health certificate that individually identifies each bird by referring to a leg band or tattoo. Be sure to keep your bird separated from other birds while out of country. No Federal quarantine is required for pet birds originating in Canada.

U.S.-origin birds that have been out of the United States for 60 days or less require USDA veterinary inspection at the port of entry. There is a fee for this service. If the birds have been out of the country for more than 60 days, there are different



requirements for entry. Contact NCIE well in advance of your return for more information.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regulate importation of certain animal species and have specific regulations regarding pets (including cats and dogs) and nonhuman primates. CDC require that pet dogs and cats appear healthy upon visual inspection at the port of entry. Cats may be imported without further restriction. Dogs coming from a country that is not free of rabies must be accompanied by proof that rabies vaccination is current and was administered at least 30 days before arrival in the United States.

Young puppies may be imported without proof of rabies vaccination but must be confined at a place of the owner's choice until they are 3 months of age and then vaccinated. Confinement must then continue for 30 days. Monkeys and other nonhuman primates may not be imported for use as pets under any circumstances; importation for scientific or exhibition purposes is strictly controlled through a registration process.

Turtles with shells that are less than 4 inches long may not be imported for commercial purposes. You may import as many as six turtles with shells at least 4 inches long (or a combination of turtles and viable eggs not exceeding six) for your personal use as pets. A permit issued by CDC must accompany live bats and certain snails.

Animals (other than birds) taken out of the United States are subject, upon return, to the same requirements as those entering for the first time. More detailed information can be found in the U.S. Customs Service Publication 509, "Pets and Wildlife." For further information, contact CDC at the address listed in appendix 1.



## **Other Biological Materials**

You must have a permit to bring in most organisms, cells and cultures, monoclonal antibodies, vaccines, and related substances, whether of plant or animal origin. This category includes organisms and products used in the biotechnology industry. For information and a permit application, contact NCIE or PPQ's permit unit.

USDA does not require permits for dead insects, including butterflies. Biological specimens of plant pests, in preservatives or dried, may be imported without restrictions but are subject to inspection on arrival in the United States to confirm the nature of the material and make sure it is free of hitchhiking plant pests or diseases. Please remember to declare these items and present them for inspection. Collectors should check in advance with FWS to determine the procedures for specimens of threatened and endangered species.

## **Soil, Sand, Minerals, and Shells**

Soilborne organisms threaten both plants and animals. If you visited a farm or ranch overseas, agricultural inspectors may have to disinfect your shoes or clothes. Vehicles must also be cleaned of soil.

You may not bring in any soil or earth that is not accompanied by a permit. The permit is issued in advance by PPQ's permit unit. Pure sand, like a small container of decorative beach sand, is allowed. Rocks, minerals, and shells are allowed, but all sand and soil must be cleaned off them. Products grown in soil (like shamrocks and truffles) must be free of soil.

## What You Can Bring Back

When you plan your trip abroad, check the list of approved products. Keep in mind that this list is not all inclusive. Also, whether or not an item you are bringing into this country appears on the list of approved products, you are still responsible for declaring to a Federal inspection officer every agricultural product in your possession.

Note that if you leave the United States with any U.S. agricultural products, you may not be allowed to bring them back in when you return to the country. Check with a U.S. border official before taking such goods across the border.

If you're unsure of what's allowed, call for help. Look in your phone book for the nearest office of USDA, APHIS, PPQ; or call PPQ's central office at (301) 734-8645. If your question is specific to animals or animal products, contact NCIE. U.S. consulates abroad may also be able to answer many of your questions. In addition, APHIS' Internet site at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov) provides information on this and other related topics.

Other Federal agencies have regulations pertaining to items that are allowed or prohibited entry into the United States as well. The U.S. Customs Service publishes the brochure "Know Before You Go (Customs Hints for Returning Residents)," and the U.S. State Department publishes the brochure "Your Trip Abroad" with general information for travelers. Please see appendix 1 for contact information.



## General List of Approved Products

This list covers products from all areas except Canada, Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- Bamboo*, dried poles only, no green at all
- Beads made of seeds* (but not jequirity beans)
- Breads, cakes, cookies, and other bakery goods*
- Candies*
- Cheeses*, hard, fully cured (but not cottage cheeses)
- Coconuts* (but husks or milk must be removed)
- Coffee*, roasted beans only
- Dried foods*, including milled rice, beans, and tea
- Fish*
- Flower bulbs* (but not crocosomia, gladiolus, and watsonia bulbs from Africa, Argentina, Brazil, France, Italy, Malta, Mauritius, Portugal, or Uruguay)
- Flowers*, most fresh or dried kinds (but not with roots), except eucalyptus
- Fruits*, canned or dried products only
- Herbarium plants* (but not witchweed)
- Herbs*, dried, for medicinal use
- Mushrooms*
- Nuts* (but not chestnuts or acorns or nuts with outer husks)
- Sauces*, canned or processed
- Seaweed*
- Seeds* (Seeds of flowers and vegetables are generally enterable. Seeds of woody trees and shrubs require a nursery stock permit from PPQ.)
- Shamrocks*, without roots or soil
- Soup and soup mixes* (but not those containing meat)
- Spices*, dried (but not curry leaves)
- Straw animals, hats, baskets, and other souvenirs* (but not items stuffed with straw)
- Vegetables*, canned or processed

## List of Approved Products From Canada

Most products grown or produced in Canada can be entered into the United States. This includes vegetables, fruits other than black currants, and meat and dressed poultry (if accompanied by proof of origin).

## List of Approved Products From Mexico

Products must have been produced or grown in Mexico. For meats, proof of origin is required.

<i>Acorns</i>	<i>Meats</i> (but not pork or uncooked poultry)
<i>Bananas</i>	<i>Melons</i>
<i>Blackberries</i>	<i>Mexican jumping beans</i>
<i>Cactus fruits</i>	<i>Nuts</i>
<i>Cerimans</i>	<i>Papayas</i>
<i>Coconuts</i> (but husks or milk must be removed)	<i>Pineapples</i>
<i>Corn husks</i> (silks only; bleached or trimmed)	<i>Raspberries</i>
<i>Dates</i>	<i>Strawberries</i>
<i>Grapes</i>	<i>Tamarind bean pods</i>
<i>Limes</i>	<i>Vegetables</i> (but not potatoes, sweet potatoes, or yams)
<i>Lychees</i>	

## List of Approved Products From Hawaii

Products must have been produced or grown in Hawaii.

<i>Coconuts</i> (but not for travelers going to Florida)	<i>Nuts</i>
<i>Coffee</i> (roasted only)	<i>Papayas</i> (only if officially certified)
<i>Flowers</i> , including leis (but not mauna loas, gardenias, jade vines, or roses)	<i>Pineapples</i>
<i>Insects</i> , dried and preserved	<i>Seeds</i> , including seed jewelry and leis
<i>Meats</i>	<i>Sugar</i> (but not sugarcane)
	<i>Wood roses</i>

## List of Approved Products From Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Products must have been produced or grown in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

<i>Avocados</i>	<i>Herbs, dried</i>
<i>Bananas</i>	<i>Leeks</i>
<i>Beans, fresh shelled</i>	<i>Meats</i>
<i>Breadfruits</i>	<i>Nuts</i>
<i>Breadnuts</i>	<i>Onions</i>
<i>Cacao beans</i>	<i>Papayas</i>
<i>Christophine fruit</i> <i>(chayotes)</i>	<i>Peas</i>
<i>Citrus fruits</i>	<i>Pineapples</i>
<i>Coconuts</i> (but not for travelers going to Florida or Hawaii)	<i>Plantains</i>
<i>Coriander</i>	<i>Pumpkins</i>
<i>Eggplant</i>	<i>Root crops, most kinds</i>
<i>Garlic</i>	<i>Seeds, dried</i>
<i>Genips</i>	<i>Squash</i>
<i>Ginger root</i>	<i>Strawberries</i>
<i>Gourds</i>	<i>Tamarind bean pods</i>

## **Appendix 1—Information Contacts for Travelers at USDA and other Federal Agencies**

**USDA-APHIS-PPQ's Permit Unit** can provide information about import requirements and permits for plants, plant parts, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural items. Contact USDA, APHIS, Plant Protection and Quarantine, 4700 River Road, Unit 136, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236, Attn.: Permit Unit, or check on the APHIS homepage at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov). You can also look in your local phone book for the nearest office of USDA, APHIS, PPQ, or call the central office at (301) 734-8645.

**USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services' National Center for Import and Export** can provide information about importing live animals and animal products. Contact USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services, 4700 River Road, Unit 40, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231, Attn.: National Center for Import and Export. Information can also be obtained by calling NCIE's automated phone line at (301) 734-7830 or on their Website at [www.aphis.usda.gov/ncie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ncie).

**The U.S. Customs Service** collects import duties (taxes) and assists the U.S. Public Health Service in regulating the importation of dogs, cats, monkeys, and birds. Contact Customs Service, P.O. Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044, or visit their Internet homepage for up-to-date information at [www.customs.ustreas.gov](http://www.customs.ustreas.gov).

**The U.S. Department of State** issues passports for U.S. citizens to travel abroad. Consular officers overseas issue visas for foreign citizens to enter the United States. Contact passport agencies located in Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Stamford, and Washington, DC, listed in local phone books or a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. For emergency assistance for U.S. citizens traveling overseas, call (202) 647-5226. For recorded travel information, call (202) 647-5225. Also check the State Department's Website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

**The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** regulates the import and export of wild and endangered plants and animals and their products. Contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Dr., Arlington, VA 22203. FWS' Website is [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** regulate importation of certain animal species and have specific regulations regarding pets (including cats and dogs) and nonhuman primates. More information is available by contacting Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Quarantine, 1600 Clifton Road, Mail Stop E-03, Atlanta, GA 30333. The phone number is (404) 639-8107, and the fax is (404) 639-2599. CDC's Website is [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).